PRESCHOOL TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN DEVELOPING CHILDREN'S COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE

Rasa Braslauskienė,[1] Erika Turauskienė[2]

Klaipėda University (Lithuania)

ABSTRACT

Processes of inclusiveness in the implementation of education, trends, and the prevailing experiences of creating inclusion in educational institutions, in the life of an institution's community, and in educational practice, have created new challenges and opportunities for teachers. The following article shows preschool teachers' experiences of inclusive education in developing children's communication competence. A qualitative research strategy was chosen for the empirical study. Preschool teachers, who work in the inclusive education group and have experience of working with children with autism spectrum disorders, participated in a semi-structured interview. Teachers' experience of inclusive education has been analysed on the basis of the following aspects: an assessment of the situation in the context of inclusive education; the organisation of children's communication competence activities in inclusive education; preschool teachers' feelings and their experiences; and the advantages and disadvantages of inclusive education experiences in developing children's communication competence. The research findings show that it is difficult for teachers to work in inclusive education groups, because educational institutions lack specialists, teachers lack competencies, motivation and educational tools, and parents are not satisfied with the educational situation.
KEY WORDS: *inclusive education, preschool age, communication competence.*

Introduction

Many changes have been taking place recently in Lithuania in the field of education, one of which is the spread of ideas of inclusive education, their organisation and implementation. The basis of inclusive education is the belief that every child must be given an opportunity to grow and develop, where well-being is nurtured and individual and unique needs and educational support demands are best met (Auškelis, Čižienė, Palačionienė *et al.*, 2022; Miltenienė, Valuckienė, Damkuvienė *et al.*, 2022).

A review of the scientific research allows us to claim that it is important to develop children's communication competence at preschool age, because the communication competence developed (the ability to use non/verbal means of communication, to find and understand information presented in spoken and written language, and apply and convey it to others) opens up opportunities for successful education and life (Trussell, Easterbrooks, 2013; Breaz, 2019; Turauskienė, Braslauskienė, 2020). The importance of accessible, socially just, inclusive and quality education for all is emphasised in educational documents. 'Lithuania's Progress Strategy "Lithuania 2030"' (2012) claims that a clever society must recognise the rights of people

[1]   Rasa Braslauskienė – professor and doctor of social sciences, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Klaipėda University
      Scientific interests – the organisation of the study process, teacher training, inclusive education, childhood education
      E-mail: rasa.braslauskiene@ku.lt
      Tel. +370 46 398 631

[2]   Erika Turauskienė – lecturer, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Klaipėda University
      Scientific interests – the development of teacher competences, preschool and primary education, inclusive education
      E-mail: erika.turauskiene@ku.lt
      Tel. +370 653 673 61

experiencing social exclusion, and help them to preserve their dignity and be full members of society. The 'Concept of a Good School' (2015) discusses and emphasises the trend in the shift from education for all to education for everyone, i.e. personalised, customised education, recognising that people's experiences, needs and aspirations are different, and that people learn at different speeds and using different methods. The 'Education Development Programme 2021–2030' (2021) and the 'General Curriculum Framework for Pre-Primary Education' (2022) actualise the importance of the availability of education and equal opportunities in the implementation of inclusive education.

Features of the development of communication competence have been analysed by foreign and Lithuanian researchers. N. Bražienė and O. Šalkuvienė (2020), V. Katinienė (2020), and D. Ilevičienė and J. Stūronaitė (2021) paid attention to how to children's oral language skills develop. L. Barzdonytė-Morkevičienė (2020), and V. Gražienė, V. Jonynienė, R. Kondratavičienė *et al.* (2021) studied how to develop children's written language skills. R. Barrocas, S. Roesch, C. Gawrilow *et al.* (2020), A. Stankevičienė (2021), and M. Agraharada and S. P. Kumar (2021) highlighted features of fine motor skills training. A. Landsbergienė (2019) and S. Saparahayuningsih and B. Badeni (2019) defined regularities in the development of children's language and speech, writing and reading. J. Petrulytė, R. Perminaitė and L. Mikulėnaitė (2020) determined when and what kind of speech and communication developmental disorders parents notice first when raising children with speech disorders, and how this is related to developmental assessment and the early diagnosis of developmental disorders. R. Braslauskienė, E. Turauskienė and J. Vaičiulienė (2022) showed the possibilities for applying active learning methods in developing children's linguistic abilities.

The 'General Curriculum Framework for Pre-Primary Education' (2022) notes that all the competences provided in the framework (communication, cultural, creative, cognitive, citizenship, digital, social, emotional and healthy lifestyle) are developed integrally. A typical day in a preschool education group consists of situations that in themselves create a meaningful field of active language use, which is important for the development of the child's language. In the preschool education group, children's communication with adults and peers occurs naturally while eating, playing, getting ready to go outside, discussing impressions after a day's work, watering plants, laying the table, etc. However, adult initiatives that enable children to purposefully develop communication knowledge, skills, abilities and value attitudes are important for the quality development of communication competence (Beinorienė, Gražienė, 2016).

From a classic point of view, a teacher who conveys existing knowledge to children by applying special educational methods, ways and tools, plays an important role in the process of the development of communication competence. From a modern point of view, in the process of communication competence development, the teacher is the student's assistant, who encourages the child to imagine, be active, take risks, explore, doubt, and search for unconventional solutions to problems and tasks (Braslauskienė *et al.*, 2022). The logic of scientific research allows us to claim that one of the most important aims of education is the strengthening of children's involvement in the educational process (Hadzigeorgiou, 2016; Girdzijauskienė, Norvilienė, Šmitienė *et al.*, 2022). Accordingly, 21st-century teachers are increasingly using innovative, non-traditional and active educational methods, ways and tools.

Research by A. Žičkevičienė and A. Bagdonas (2020), and R. Braslauskienė and E. Turauskienė (2021), revealed that *teachers face difficulties when developing children's communication competence*: sometimes they speak unclearly, are not able to use scissors, stutter, behave aggressively, and are reluctant to communicate and cooperate; teachers do not use the opportunities provided by information technology, etc. In order to solve the ensuing problems, teachers should cooperate actively with the parents of their students and colleagues (special pedagogues, psychologists and speech therapists), apply the good experience of foreign educators, constantly learn and improve their qualifications, be children's game partners, create a warm atmosphere and an attractive learning environment for children, encourage children to communicate with their peers with various educational needs, etc.

Even though the review of scientific literature allows us to claim that considerable attention is paid to the implementation of inclusive education in educational institutions, it is noticeable that preschool teachers' experience of inclusive education in developing children's communication competence is not widely presen-

ted or analysed. Therefore, the problematic question is raised in the article: what are preschool teachers' experiences of inclusive education in developing children's communication competence?

The research object is preschool teachers' experience of inclusive education in developing children's communication competence.

The research aim is to share preschool teachers' inclusive education experience in developing children's communication competence.

The research methods: the analysis of scientific literature and documents, qualitative research, semi-structured interview, qualitative content analysis.

1. Research methodology

In order to show the inclusive education experience of preschool teachers (PUMs) in developing children's communication competence, qualitative research was chosen. The research data was collected according to the purpose and objectives of the research. The data analysis was performed in the following order (Kardelis, 2017; Žydžiūnaitė, 2017): the recording of analytical remarks while analysing data which, according to the above-mentioned authors, promote analytical thinking and stimulate insight; and, later, categorisation was performed (certain categories were singled out and defined in order to facilitate a comparison of the elements belonging to them). When working with texts, initial categories were first created, then subcategories were reviewed, revised and distinguished, and statements which illustrate them were presented.

In the ensuing research, sample units were selected from the population on the basis of *non-probability purposive sampling.* Individuals who can provide meaningful information about the research subject, considering the aim of the work, were selected for the research. In this case, these are six PUMs *who work in the group of inclusive education* and *have work experience with children with autism spectrum disorder* (ASD). The recommended sample size for individual interviews is between five and 30 people (Brinkman, 2018). Therefore, this sample is sufficient.

There were four topics when planning the research questions: *an assessment of the situation (in the context of inclusive education)* (How do you assess the inclusive education situation in your educational institution?); *the organisation of communication competence development activities for preschool-age children in inclusive education* (How do you organise communication competence development activities in an inclusive education group? What information communication technologies do you use in the development of children's communication competence in an inclusive education group? How do you choose the content of education? What is the most important thing to consider? What do you think are the opportunities for developing children's communication competence in an inclusive education group?); *PUM feelings, experiences* (What advantages and which disadvantages can you single out when evaluating inclusive education?); *advantages and disadvantages of inclusive education experiences in developing children's communication competence* (What are the most important actions to be taken when organising inclusive education while carrying out activities for the development of children's communication competence in a group?).

Qualitative content analysis was used to process the research data, and helped to cover the information obtained, categorise the data into categories and subcategories, and draw conclusions based on this (Nyumba, Wilson, Derrick *et al.*, 2018). The research was carried out in accordance with the principles of research ethics: benevolence, respect for the dignity of a person, the right to receive correct information, justice (Žydžiūnaitė, 2017). The informants were also guaranteed the confidentiality and anonymity of the information received.

2. The findings of the research

In the course of the research, *PUMs were asked to assess the situation of inclusive education in their educational institution.* The research findings are presented in Table 1.

The data presented in Table 1 show that PUMs are happy that children with ASD receive help from academic support specialists (PUM1, PUM2, PUM3, PUM4, PUM5), and the help of a teacher's assistant (PUM1,

PUM3, PUM4, PUM5). However, '*Specialists are not ready to work in such groups. There's a lack of tolerance, of understanding how to work with such children,*' PUM1 said during the interview. When speaking about the situation with inclusive education, PUM1 and PUM4 emphasised that it is difficult to cooperate with parents whose expectations do not correspond to reality. PUM1 and PUM3 stated that children with ASD require a lot of attention from the teacher, make too much noise, and interfere with activities. PUM2 expressed concern at not having an assistant. PUM3 stated that there is a lack of money for the purchase of special educational tools.

G. Bakanas, U. Cibulskaitė, R. Dukynaitė *et al*. (2022) note that child welfare committee and academic support specialists (social educators, special educators, speech therapists, psychologists, etc) should provide assistance to children with ASD at the level of the educational institution. The situation is different in different educational institutions in Lithuania: in some, the activities of the child welfare committee are only formal, and not noticeable. The 'Analysis of Teachers and Academic Support Specialists' Practical Experiences in Applying Universal Design Tools for Learning' (2022) confirms that there is a shortage of academic support specialists, and working ones are not always able to provide quality support to children with ASD or their parents. Due to the constantly increasing number of children with ASD, the lack of specialists, and excessive documentation, both teachers and academic support specialists, who are trying to meet the needs of every child, feel exhausted, and personally go through the problems arising during the educational process.

Table 1. An assessment of the inclusive education situation

Category	Extracts from interview texts	Informant
Assessment of the situation in the context of inclusive education	*It depends how you look at it* [...] *children receive the help of a speech therapist, psychologist or special educator. When forming a group, headmasters take into account the fact that children with special educational needs require more attention and help. Therefore, there are fewer children in the group. We have an assistant. Nevertheless, specialists are not ready to work in such groups. There's a lack of tolerance, of an understanding of how to work with such children* [...] *parents of normally developing children are not happy*	PUM1
	The child receives the help of a psychologist and a speech therapist, parents take one to the Child Development Centre, where additional [...] *help* [...] *is provided. We don't have an assistant* [...] *she would have made the work easier* [...] *We purchase the minimum amount of special tools, because there's a lack of funds*	PUM2
	The situation is complicated. Teachers lack knowledge and motivation. The parents of children with special educational needs make high demands and overestimate their children's abilities. The parents of other children are not satisfied because children with special educational needs require the teacher's attention [...] *and disrupt the lesson*	PUM3
	A speech therapist and a psychologist work at the institution, a special educator comes once a week, and we have an assistant in the classroom all day. The work [...] *is complicated, because the parents transfer all responsibility for education to the teacher.*	PUM4
	I assess the situation positively. Teachers [...] *adapt to the current situation, and try to cooperate with specialists and the parents of the children. We have teacher's assistants in all groups. The institution has a Child Welfare Committee, where we discuss ongoing issues*	PUM5

Source: the authors, 2023

PUMs were asked to say *how communication competence development activities are organised in the context of inclusive education*. The research data are presented in Table 2.

The research data highlighted (Table 2) that PUMs carry out the following activities when developing children's communication competence in the inclusive education group: initiate games (PUM1, PUM2, PUM3, PUM4, PUM5); promote creative activities (PUM1, PUM2, PUM3, PUM5); teach children to write letters (PUM1, PUM3, PUM4, PUM5); use visual aids (PUM1, PUM2, PUM3, PUM5); develop children's fine motor skills, teaching them to use scissors, drawing and writing aids (PUM1, PUM2, PUM3); initiate dialogue

reading (PUM1, PUM4, PUM5); organise educational trips (PUM1, PUM4, PUM5); prepare and/or implement projects (PUM1, PUM4, PUM5); enable speaking in monologues (PUM2, PUM4, PUM5) and dialogues (PUM4, PUM5); discuss the schedule with SEN children (PUM1, PUM5); divide tasks into parts for SEN children (PUM1); organise lessons without borders (PUM1); and apply kinaesthetic learning methods (PUM2).

During the research, it was found that PUMs usually organise activities in the preschool education group (PUM1, PUM2, PUM3, PUM4, PUM5) in other facilities of the educational institution, in an assembly hall (PUM4, PUM5), and in technology classes (PUM4). Sometimes PUM3 and PUM4 organise activities outside, and PUM1 organises activities in a museum. PUM1 shared the experience: 'This year we organised lessons without borders […] we travelled with the children to […] museums […] and other cultural institutions, we studied there. This experience is new for both me and the children […] but I already see positive results: children's motivation and desire to learn are stimulated; communication skills are strengthened […]; and we cooperate more actively with parents.'

Table 2. Communication competence development activities when conducting inclusive education

Category	Subcategory	Extracts from interview texts
Communication competence development activities when conducting inclusive education	Creative activities	*I encourage children to do creative work [...] to arrange letters using natural materials [...] a light table (PUM1). We offer painting, gouache scraping, for this we use not only a brush, but also our fingers, ear picks, stamps, various paper tubes, and straws (PUM3, PUM5). We make up fictional stories, act, and improvise (PUM2)*
	Writing letters	*We write, and copy upper case letters (PUM3, PUM5, PUM1). We write letter spelling tests (PUM4)*
	Fine motor training	*We sculpt, we move things [...] from one container to another (PUM3, PUM2, PUM1)*
	Games	*We play (PUM1, PUM3, PUM4, PUM5). Games with sounds, silence, relaxation games (PUM2)*
	Dialogue reading	*We read fairy tales and stories, and discuss them (PUM1, PUM4, PUM5)*
	Educational trips	*We travel to museums, and other cultural institutions (PUM1). We organise excursions and trips (PUM5, PUM4)*
	Encouraging monologue speaking	*Children talk [...] about their favourite toy, or character in a book (PUM2, PUM4, PUM5)*
	Encouraging dialogue speaking	*Children communicate with their peers (PUM 4, PUM5)*
	Project activities	*We prepare projects and implement them (PUM4, PUM5). We participate in international [...] and republic projects (PUM1)*
	Kinaesthetic learning	*I apply kinaesthetic learning methods [...] which is learning by trying everything out in practice, exploring, developing through experience in various environments (PUM2)*
	Visual aids	*We use a lot of visual aids, cards, and various pictures (PUM1, PUM2, PUM3, PUM5)*
	A clear schedule for the group and a child with SEN	*Before the 'Ryto ratas' (Morning Circle), I discuss with the child individually what and when we will do something. I speak clearly, in short sentences. I sometimes use visual aids, or an interactive screen (PUM1). In the group, pictures indicate the plan for the day, the schedule: when we have breakfast, when lessons take place, when we go outside (PUM5)*
	Dividing tasks into parts	*I divide all tasks into parts. When the child completes one part, I praise her and let her play quietly [...] and then I assign other tasks (PUM1)*
	Lessons without borders	*This year, we tried lessons without borders (PUM1)*

Source: the authors, 2023

The review of scientific literature (Labutė, Žemaitaitė, 2015; Strazdienė, Eirošė, Norvilienė, 2018; Gražienė, Jonynienė, Kondratavičienė, 2021) allows us to claim that in modern schools one of the important conditions for improving the quality of the educational process is information and communication technologies (ICT). ICT makes it possible to offer educational methods that match the children's strengths and weaknesses, as well as learning content adapted to those characteristics. PUMs who participated in the research were asked to say *what ICT they apply when developing children's communication competence in the inclusive education group.* The research findings are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. The application of ICT in the development of children's communication competence
(in the context of inclusive education)

Category	Subcategory	Extracts from interview texts
The application of ICT in the development of children's communication competence (in the context of inclusive education)	Interactive whiteboard	*Using an interactive board, children complete tasks in a digital learning environment Eduka class [...] play Wordwall games; write [...] in the Paint app* (PUM1, PUM2, PUM3)
	Digital projector	*I use a projector in the group. I prepare presentations using the Power Point and Canva programs [...] we watch virtual performances* (PUM5)
	Computer	*Children [...] use the computer keyboard to type text, write emails to parents and friends, sometimes [...] we use Skype, Messenger* (PUM1)
	Tablet PC	*Children write letters, words, play games on a tablet computer* (PUM4)
	TV	*We have a TV in the group* (PUM4)
	Mobile phone	*We use QR scanners [...] browse e-books, listen to audio books* (PUM1). *To diversify the educational process, I give a phone, suggest playing online games, watch videos on YouTube* (PUM3, PUM5). *The assistant gives their personal phone to calm [one] down, and allows to play* (PUM4)
	Educational bee robot *Bee-Bot*	*We have an educational bee-bot that helps develop children's communication skills, and programming skills […] Children program the robot to move on a special mat* (PUM1)

Source: the authors, 2023

The data presented in Table 3 show that *PUMs use the following ICT in the inclusive education group to help children develop communication competence:*

Mobile phone, with the help of which children learn to scan QR codes, browse e-books, listen to audio books (PUM1), and play online games (PUM3, PUM4, PUM5), and watch *YouTube* videos (PUM5).

Interactive board, where *Wordwall* games are played; carry out tasks in a digital learning environment *Eduka* class, use the *Paint* app (PUM1, PUM2, PUM3).

Digital projector (PUM5). PUM5 said during the interview: 'I prepare presentations using the *Power Point* and *Canva* programs […] we watch virtual performances.'

Educational bee-bot (PUM1). An educational bee-bot helps in learning the basics of programming, decoding and problem-solving. *Bee-bot* are easy to control: they can be programmed using the buttons on the robot or controlled by a special app.

A computer (PUM1) keyboard is used to type texts; *tablet computer* (PUM4); *TV* (PUM4), etc.

According to N. Strazdienė *et al.* (2018), the success of using ICT is determined by the PUM's information technologies (IT) competencies. Educators' knowledge is associated with means of IT, the ability to apply them, the purposeful use of IT, paying attention to computer networks, and constructivist learning paradigms (integral, project-based teaching, collaborative teaching, etc). Therefore, PUMs should self-assess and constantly improve IT their communication and information management competences (Ragauskaitė, 2021).

During the research, it was sought to find out *how PUMs select educational content for the development of children's communication competence* (topics, specific activities, games, etc). The research findings are presented in Table 4.

The data presented in Table 4 show that when selecting the content of education, PUMs take into account: the General Curriculum Framework for Pre-Primary Education (PUM1, PUM2, PUM3, PUM4, PUM5); traditional public holidays, events, and those of the educational institution (PUM1, PUM2, PUM3, PUM4, PUM5); methodical recommendations 'Patirčių erdvės' (PUM1, PUM4, PUM5); children's opportunities and interests (PUM1, PUM2, PUM3); the educational difficulties that children face (PUM3, PUM5); children's ideas and suggestions (PUM4); children's special educational needs (PUM2); and the advice of academic support specialists (psychologists, speech therapists, special educators) (PUM5).

Table 4. The selection of educational content for the development of children's communication competence

Category	Subcategory	Extracts from interview texts
The selection of educational content	The General Curriculum Framework	*The General Curriculum Framework for Pre-Primary Education* (PUM1, PUM2, PUM3, PUM4, PUM5)
	Traditional celebrations and events	*Public holidays* (PUM2, PUM3, PUM4). *Traditional events of the institution* (PUM1, PUM5)
	Methodical recommendations	*I borrow ideas from the methodological publication 'Patirčių erdvės'* (PUM1, PUM4, PUM5)
	Children's opportunities and interests	*I take into account children's opportunities to communicate* (PUM1, PUM2, PUM3). *I try to find out what children like [...] and what is interesting to them* (PUM1, PUM2, PUM3)
	Children's suggestions and ideas	*Activities are planned based on the children's suggestions and ideas* (PUM4)
	The educational difficulties that children face	*After completing the assessment, I try to [...] analyse it, find out what children are bad at, and [...] fill the gaps* (PUM5, PUM3)
	Children's special educational needs	*PPT conclusions [...] I adapt tasks for children with special needs. I consider how long they will manage to sit them out, whether they will be able to work in groups* (PUM2)
	Expert advice	*I consult with a psychologist, a speech therapist, and a special educator* (PUM5)

Source: the authors, 2023

During the research, PUMs were asked to name *what, in their opinion, are the opportunities for the development of communication competence in the inclusive education group.* The research data are presented in Table 5.

PUMs identified *opportunities* for the development of communication competence in the inclusive education group (Table 5): SEN and neurotypical children have the opportunity to learn with and from each other (PUM1, PUM2, PUM3, PUM4). PUM4 emphasised that SEN children copy the way of speaking of neurotypical children, and learn new words. PUM1 claimed that in the inclusive education group, neurotypical children learn to accept differences as a natural thing, and understand that each child is unique and has their own characteristic traits, communicate differently, and has their own pace. The social-emotional skills of SEN and neurotypical children are developed (PUM1, PUM4, PUM5); there is more active cooperation with academic support specialists in the inclusive education group (PUM1, PUM5), and with the parents of children (PUM1, PUM4); children's learning motivation is stimulated, learning is given meaning (PUM1); each child participates actively in the educational process, and makes optimal progress according to their abilities (PUM5); the learning environment is continuously enriched and updated (PUM2), etc.

Table 5. Opportunities for the development of communication competence in the inclusive education group

Category	Subcategory	Extracts from interview texts
Opportunities for the development of communication competence in the inclusive education group	The social-emotional skills of special educational needs (SEN) and neurotypical children are developed	*Children can [...] learn to cooperate with other people* (PUM1, PUM5)
	Children can learn with and from each other	*Children with special educational needs have the opportunity to learn from other children, learn from their experience, and develop much faster* (PUM2, PUM3, PUM4). *Healthy children learn to accept differences as a natural thing, and realise that each [...] is unique* (PUM1)
	The active participation of each child in the educational process	*Everyone [...] can make progress* (PUM5)
	Cooperate more actively with academic support specialists	*The entire team of specialists work* (PUM5, PUM1)
	Cooperate more actively with parents of children	*Sometimes it is necessary to explain to parents of normal children why that child is in the group* (PUM4). *We talk to the parents of children with special educational needs, we provide recommendations and help, because it's [...] psychologically difficult for them* (PUM1)
	To stimulate children's learning motivation	*It is necessary [...] to make children interested and get them started, so that they understand that learning is fun, and want to [...] improve* (PUM1)
	To enrich the educational environment	*It is necessary to create new tools and visual material [...] and update it* (PUM2)

Source: the authors, 2023

During the research, PUMs identified the following *advantages* of communication competence development in the inclusive education group (Table 6): the social exclusion of SEN children is reduced (PUM1, PUM2, PUM3, PUM4, PUM5); SEN children receive timely help from academic support specialists (PUM1, PUM2, PUM3, PUM4, PUM5); the social-emotional competencies of SEN and neurotypical children are developed (PUM1, PUM4).

Table 6. The advantages of the development of communication competence in the inclusive education group

Category	Subcategory	Extracts from interview texts
Advantages of the development of communication competence in the inclusive education group	Social-emotional competences are developed	*Sometimes it is necessary to explain to the parents of normal children why that child is in the group* (PUM4). *Learn to recognise and respect diversity* (PUM1)
	Reduction of social exclusion of SENs	*Children with special educational needs can communicate with their peers* (PUM2, PUM3, PUM4, PUM5, PUM1)
	SENs receive timely assistance	*Children with special educational needs receive the help of a teacher, teacher's assistant, and specialists* (PUM1, PUM2, PUM3, PUM4, PUM5)

Source: the authors, 2023

L. Navickienė, V. Piščalkienė, L. Mikulėnaitė *et al.* (2019) note that education in an inclusive environment is useful for both children with ASD and neurotypical children. The behaviour of children with ASD improves; they learn to be part of a group, and to follow the order established in the group. Neurotypical children learn compassion and tolerance, become more broadminded in relation to otherness, and get used to being patient. They have the right to get acquainted with various people who make up the community and understand them, so they must learn to communicate with everyone. Unfortunately, it is not always possible to achieve good results. Even the best intentions can fail and have negative consequences, if there is not enough information, if there is a lack of preparation, and if insufficient efforts are made. Therefore, PUMs should improve their professional competence, improve their qualifications, and learn to work with various children with different needs, disorders, etc.

The analysis of research data highlighted the *disadvantages* of the development of communication competence in the inclusive education group from the point of view of PUMs (Table 7): PUMs and teacher assistants lack experience and knowledge (PUM1, PUM2, PUM3, PUM4); the negative attitudes of parents towards children with SEN (PUM3, PUM4, PUM5); the lack of academic support specialists (PUM2, PUM4); the high number of children in the inclusive education group (PUM3, PUM5); the lack of facilities (PUM1); the lack of special tools (PUM2); and bullying (PUM4).

Table 7. The disadvantages of the development of communication competence in the inclusive education group

Category	Subcategory	Extracts from interview texts
Disadvantages of the development of communication competence in the inclusive education group	PUMs and teacher's assistants lack experience and knowledge	*Teachers themselves sometimes don't know how to work with such children* (PUM3, PUM4, PUM1). *Teaching assistants are not qualified specialists, they don't know how to help the child* (PUM2)
	A lack of academic support specialists	*A lack of specialists* (PUM4, PUM2)
	Too many children in the group	*Still, the number of children in the group is not small* [...] *if everybody comes, it's hard to manage* (PUM3, PUM5)
	Negative attitudes of parents towards children with special educational needs	*Sometimes it's necessary to explain to the parents of normal children why that child is in the group* (PUM4, PUM5, PUM3)
	A lack of facilities	*There is a lack of facilities for calming down, so that a child can be alone and can calm down* (PUM1)
	A lack of special tools	*We can only buy the minimum amount of special tools because of the lack of money* (PUM2)
	Bullying	*This is where bullying begins: 'Why are you yelling? You're like a baby'* (PUM4)

Source: the authors, 2023

From the point of view of PUMs, in order to improve the development of children's communication competence in the inclusive education group, SEN children should be given more individual attention and assistance (PUM1, PUM2, PUM3, PUM4, PUM5); the number of staff in the inclusive education group should be increased (PUM1, PUM2, PUM3); and family responsibility should be strengthened (PUM3, PUM4, PUM5).

Conclusion

The qualitative research data helped to reveal preschool teachers' experience of inclusive education in the development of children's communication competence. Teachers assess the inclusive education situation differently. In their opinion, children with SEN receive the help of educational specialists, they are taught in the inclusive education group, they have an opportunity to improve their social-emotional skills, and they develop according to their capabilities and needs. However, teachers state that working in the inclusive education group is difficult, because of the lack of specialists in educational institutions; the teachers lack competence, motivation and educational tools; and parents are not satisfied with the educational situation. The qualitative research highlighted the following findings:1) while developing children's communication competence in the inclusive education group, preschool teachers carry out the following activities: initiate games and creative activities; enable children to speak in dialogue and monologue; use a lot of visual aids; discuss with the SEN child their schedule; apply kinaesthetic learning methods; organise lessons without borders; and use information communication technologies (mobile phones, interactive boards, computers, educational bee-robot, etc); 2) when choosing educational content, preschool teachers take into account the 'General Curriculum Framework for Pre-Primary Education' (2022), public and educational institution holidays, and children's interests, opportunities, special educational needs, etc. Preschool teachers believe that the situation in the inclusive education group can be improved by an optimal number of staff; increasing family responsibility for the child's education, and strengthening individual attention and support for the child.

When summarising the findings of the research, the limitations of the research should also be noted. The limitations of the qualitative research are related to the inevitable subjectivity in qualitative research. Even though when planning and implementing the research, all the requirements necessary for this type of research were followed, the generalisation of the research data and the application possibilities are partially limited by the small number of research participants. It would be incorrect to apply the findings of the ensuing research to all preschool education institutions, but it is likely that the opinions expressed by the participants in the research allows us to understand what preschool teachers' experiences of inclusive education in developing children's communication competence are. The research findings allow us to foresee further opportunities for researching this phenomenon, in order to learn the opinions of other participants in the educational process about the experiences of inclusive education in developing children's communication competence.

References

Agraharada, M., Kumar, S. P. (2021). *Effect of integrated development training programme on fundamental motor skills of kindergarten children*. <https://www.joper.org/JOPER/JOPERVolume8_Issue4_10_12_2021_254.pdf> [2023-04-10].

Auškelis, R., Čižienė, I., Palačionienė, L., et al. (2022). *Įtraukties link. ką turi žinoti mokykla? Atmintinė mokykloms*. Vilnius: Nacionalinė švietimo agentūra.

Bakanas, G., Cibulskaitė, U., Dukynaitė, R., et al. (2022). *Lietuva. Švietimas šalyje ir regionuose. Įtraukusis ugdymas.* Vilnius: Švietimo, mokslo ir sporto ministerija.

Barrocas, R., Roesch, S., Gawrilow, C., et al. 2020. *Putting a Finger on Numerical Development – Reviewing the Contributions of Kindergarten Finger Gnosis and Fine Motor Skills to Numerical Abilities*. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.01012

Barzdonytė-Morkevičienė, L. 2020. *Skaitymo ir rašymo knyga 6 m. vaikams*. Kaunas: Šviesa.

Beinorienė, R., Gražienė, V. (2016). *Nuostabusis ženklų ir prasmių pasaulis.* Vilnius: Ugdymo plėtotės centras.

Braslauskienė, R., Turauskienė, E., Vaičiulienė J. (2022). *Active learning methods in developing children's language skills at pre-school age: teachers' attitudes.* https://doi.org/10.15181/rfds.v37i2.2419

Bražienė, N., Šalkuvienė, O. (2020). *Taisyk žodžiui ir skaičiui kelią.* Metodinė priemonė. Šiauliai: Šiaulių universitetas.

Breaz, A. M. (2019). Gender differences in recovery of communication difficulties in pre-school children. *Journal Plus Education*, *25* (2), 113–121.

Brinkman, S. (2018). The Interview. *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*, *5*, 997–1038.

Geros mokyklos koncepcija. (2015). <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/46675970a82611e59010bea026bdb259?jfwid=32wf90sn> [2023-03-01].

Girdzijauskienė, R., Norvilienė, A., Šmitienė, G., et al. (2022). Mokinių įsitraukimo į mokymąsi naudojant skaitmenines priemones stiprinimas. *Acta Paedagogica Vilnensia*, *49*, 115–130. https://doi.org/10.15388/ActPaed.2022.49.8

Gražienė, V., Jonynienė, V., Kondratavičienė, R., et al. (2021). *Patirčių erdvės. Rekomendacijos priešmokyklinio ugdymo pedagogui*. Vilnius: UAB „Vitae Litera".

Gražienė, V., Jonynienė, V., Kondratavičienė, R., et al. (2021). *Informatinis mąstymas priešmokykliniame amžiuje*. Vilnius: UAB „Vitae Litera".

Hadzigeorgiou, Y. (2016). *Imaginative Thinking in Science and Science Education*. Switzerland: Springer. Doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-29526-8_1

Ilevičienė, D., Stūronaitė, J. (2021). *4–5 m. amžiaus vaikų sakytinės kalbos ugdymas(is) meninėje veikloje*. <https://dspace.kaunokolegija.lt/handle/123456789/1973> [2023-04-10].

Kardelis, K. (2017). *Mokslinių tyrimų metodologija ir metodai*. Vilnius: MELC.

Katinienė, V. 2020. *Mokau(si) kalbėti. Kalbos ugdymo pratybos, padėsiančios prakalbinti vaiką.* Kaunas: Spaudos praktika.

Labutė, Ž., Žemaitaitytė, I. (2015). Informacinių komunikacinių technologijų pritaikymo galimybės socialinio ugdymo pamokose. *Socialinių mokslų studijos*, 7 (2), 292–304. http://dx.doi.org/10.13165/SMS-15-7-2-08

Landsbergienė, A. (2019). *Pradinukų abėcėlė tėvams ir mokytojams*. Vilnius: Dvi tylos.

Lietuvos pažangos strategija „Lietuva 2030". (2012). <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/TAIS.425517> [2023-03-01].

Miltenienė, L., Valuckienė, J., Damkuvienė, M., et al. (2022). Vadovų požiūris ir veikmė kuriant įtraukią mokyklą. *Specialusis ugdymas*, *44*, 9–54. https://doi.org/10.15388/se.2022.v1i44.11

Mokytojų ir švietimo pagalbos specialistų praktinių patirčių taikant universalaus dizaino priemones ugdymui(si) analizė. Projektas Nr. 09.4.1-ESFA-V-713-02-0001 Profesinio mokymo ir mokymosi visą gyvenimą informacinių sistemų ir registrų plėtra. (2022). Vilnius: NŠA.

Navickienė, L., Piščalkienė, V., Mikulėnaitė, L. (2019). *Kaip padėti vaikui, turinčiam autizmo spektro sutrikimų?* Vilnius: UPC.

Nyumba, T., Wilson, K., Derrick, C. J., et al. (2018). The use of focus group discussion methodology: Insights from two decades of application in conservation. *Methods in Ecology and Evolution, 9*, 20–32. https://doi.org/10.1111/2041-210X.12860

Petrulytė, J., Perminaitė, R., Mikulėnaitė, L. 2020. Vaikų psichomotorinės raidos tikrinimo ir kalbos bei bendravimo sutrikimų diagnostikos sąsajos. *Sveikatos mokslai*, *30* (1), 114–117. https://doi.org/10.35988/sm-hs.2020.019

Priešmokyklinio ugdymo bendrosios programos projektas. (2022)*.* Vilnius: NŠA.

Ragauskaitė, A. (2021). *Bendrojo ugdymo mokytojų komunikacijos ir informacijos valdymo kompetencijos tobulinimas.* Metodinis leidinys. Vilnius: NŠA.

Saparahayuningsih, S., Badeni, B. (2019). Improving Children's Fine Motor Skills through Pencil Skills. *Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research*, *295*, 119–122. https://doi.org/10.2991/icetep-18.2019.29

Stankevičienė, A. 2021. *Smulkiosios motorikos reikšmė ikimokyklinio amžiaus vaikų kalbinių gebėjimų lavinimui*. <https://dspace.kaunokolegija.lt/handle/123456789/4974> [2023-04-05].

Strazdienė, N., Eirošė, L., Norvilienė, A. (2018). *Informacinių technologijų plėtra pradiniame ugdyme ir vaikų sveikatai palankios mokymo(si) aplinkos kūrimo ypatumai.* https://doi.org/10.15181/tbb.v79i3.1890

Švietimo plėtros 2021–2030 m. programa. (2021). <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/bb746f03565d11ec86bdcb0a6d573b32?jfwid=rivwzvpvg> [2023-03-01].

Trussell, W. J., Easterbrooks, S. R. (2013). The Effect of Enhanced Storybook Interaction on Signing Deaf Children's Vocabulary. *The Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education*, *19*, 319–332. https://doi.org/10.1093/deafed/ent055

Turauskienė, E., Braslauskienė, R. (2020). *Priešmokyklinio ugdymo mokytojo bendradarbiavimo su tėvais galimybės ugdant vaikų komunikavimo kompetenciją darželyje: priešmokyklinio ugdymo mokytojų nuomonė.* https://doi.org/10.15388/SRE.2020.12

Žičkevičienė, A., Bagdonas, A. (2020). Pasakų reikšmė ugdant kalbinius įgūdžius ikimokykliniame amžiuje. *Mokslas – Verslas – Visuomenė: dabartis ir ateities įžvalgos*, *5*, 162–168.

Žydžiūnaitė, V., Sabaliauskas, S. (2017). *Kokybiniai tyrimai: principai ir metodai. Vadovėlis socialinių mokslų studijų programų studentams.* Vilnius: Vaga.

PRIEŠMOKYKLINIO UGDYMO MOKYTOJŲ ĮTRAUKIOJO UGDYMO PATIRTYS UGDANT VAIKŲ KOMUNIKAVIMO KOMPETENCIJĄ

Rasa Braslauskienė, Erika Turauskienė
Klaipėdos universitetas (Lietuva)

Santrauka

Pastaruoju metu Lietuvos švietimo sričiai tenka nemažai pokyčių, susijusių su įtraukiojo ugdymo idėjų sklaida ir įgyvendinimu. Įtraukiojo ugdymo pagrindas yra tikėjimas, kad kiekvienam vaikui turi būti sudarytos galimybės augti ir ugdytis ten, kur puoselėjama jo gerovė, geriausiai tenkinami jo individualūs, saviti poreikiai bei švietimo pagalbos reikmės (Auškelis ir kt., 2022; Miltenienė ir kt., 2022).

Mokslinių tyrimų apžvalga leidžia teigti, kad priešmokykliniame amžiuje svarbu ugdyti vaikų komunikavimo kompetenciją – gebėjimą taikyti (ne)verbalines komunikavimo priemones, surasti bei suprasti informaciją, pateiktą sakytine ir rašytine kalba, ją pritaikyti bei perteikti kitiems – lemiančių sėkmingo ugdymo(si) ir gyvenimo galimybes (Trussell, Easterbrooks, 2013; Breaz, 2019; Turauskienė, Braslauskienė, 2020). Visiems prieinamo, socialiai teisingo, įtraukaus ir kokybiško švietimo svarba akcentuojama švietimo dokumentuose. „Lietuvos pažangos strategijoje „Lietuva 2030" (2012) pažymima, kad sumani visuomenė turi pripažinti socialinę atskirtį patiriančių asmenų teises, padėti jiems būti visaverčiais visuomenės nariais. „Geros mokyklos koncepcijoje" (2015) aptariama perėjimo nuo švietimo visiems prie švietimo kiekvienam tendencija, t. y. suasmeninto ugdymo(si), akcentuojant, kad žmonių patirtys, poreikiai, siekiai skiriasi, mokomasi skirtingais tempais ir būdais. „Švietimo plėtros 2021–2030 m. programoje" (2021), „Priešmokyklinio ugdymo bendrojoje programoje" (2022) aktualizuojama švietimo prieinamumo ir lygių galimybių svarba, vykdant įtraukųjį ugdymą.

Mokslinės literatūros apžvalga leidžia teigti, kad įtraukiajam ugdymui įgyvendinti ugdymo įstaigose skiriamas nemažas dėmesys, tačiau pastebima, kad priešmokyklinio ugdymo mokytojų įtraukiojo ugdymo patirtys ugdant vaikų komunikavimo kompetenciją nėra plačiai pristatomos ir analizuojamos. Todėl šiame straipsnyje keliamas probleminis klausimas, kokios yra priešmokyklinio ugdymo mokytojų įtraukiojo ugdymo patirtys ugdant vaikų komunikavimo kompetenciją? Tyrimo objektas – priešmokyklinio ugdymo mokytojų įtraukiojo ugdymo patirtys ugdant vaikų komunikavimo kompetenciją. Tyrimo tikslas – atskleisti priešmokyklinio ugdymo mokytojų įtraukiojo ugdymo patirtis ugdant vaikų komunikavimo kompetenciją.

Siekiant atskleisti priešmokyklinio ugdymo mokytojų (toliau tekste – PUM) įtraukiojo ugdymo patirtis ugdant vaikų komunikavimo kompetenciją pasirinktas kokybinis tyrimas, kurį atliekant rinkta, analizuota, sisteminta mokslinė literatūra ir dokumentuose pateikta informacija, atliktų mokslinių tyrimų duomenys bei rezultatai; pasirinkta tyrimo strategija, kurtas tyrimo dizainas; sudarytas tyrimo instrumentas; atliktas iš dalies struktūruotas interviu; analizuoti, apibendrinti duomenys, išskirti tyrimo radiniai, rengta tyrimo ataskaita. Atsižvelgiant į darbo tikslą, tyrimui atrinkti individai, galintys suteikti prasmingos informacijos apie tiriamąjį dalyką. Šiuo atveju – tai PUM, dirbantys įtraukiojo ugdymo grupėje ir turintys darbo patirties su vaikais, turinčiais autizmo spektro sutrikimą.

Kokybinio tyrimo duomenys leido atskleisti priešmokyklinio ugdymo mokytojų įtraukiojo ugdymo patirtis ugdant vaikų komunikavimo kompetenciją. Mokytojos įtraukiojo ugdymo situaciją vertina skirtingai. Jų nuomone, specialiųjų ugdymosi poreikių (toliau tekste – SUP) turintiems vaikams teikiama švietimo specialistų pagalba; jie ugdosi įtraukiojo ugdymo grupėje, kur turi galimybę tobulinti socialinius-emocinius gebėjimus, ugdytis pagal savo galimybes ir poreikius. Vis dėlto mokytojai mini, kad dirbti įtraukiojo ugdymo grupėje sudėtinga, nes ugdymo įstaigose trūksta specialistų; mokytojams trūksta kompetencijų, motyvacijos, ugdymo(si) priemonių; tėvų ugdymo(si) situacija netenkina. Kokybinis tyrimas išryškino šiuos radinius: 1) priešmokyklinio ugdymo mokytojai ugdydami vaikų komunikavimo kompetenciją įtraukiojo ugdymo grupėje vykdo šias

veiklas: inicijuoja žaidimus, kūrybinę veiklą; įgalina vaikus kalbėti dialogo, monologo formomis; naudoja daug vaizdinių priemonių; aptaria su SUP turinčiu vaiku jo dienotvarkę; taiko kinestetinio mokymosi metodus; organizuoja pamokas be sienų; naudoja informacines komunikacines technologijas (mobilųjį telefoną, interaktyvų ekraną, kompiuterį, edukacine bitutę-robotą ir kt.); 2) parinkdami ugdymo(si) turinį priešmokyklinio ugdymo mokytojai remiasi „Priešmokyklinio ugdymo bendrąja programa" (2022), atsižvelgia į valstybines ir ugdymo įstaigos šventes, vaikų interesus, galimybes, specialiuosius ugdymo(si) poreikius ir kt. Priešmokyklinio ugdymo mokytojų nuomone, situaciją įtraukiojo ugdymo grupėje pagerintų optimalus darbuotojų skaičius, šeimos atsakomybės už vaiko ugdymą(si), individualaus dėmesio ir pagalbos vaikui didinimas.

PAGRINDINIAI ŽODŽIAI: įtraukusis *ugdymas, priešmokyklinis amžius, komunikavimo kompetencija.*

JEL KLASIFIKACIJA: I21, I25.